

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 8LOS ANGELES TIMES
17 June 1980

Clark Urges Probe of CIA Role in Iran

Ex-Attorney General Says Time Is Ripe for Hostage Release

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NEW YORK—Declaring that the mood in Iran could lead to the quick release of the 53 American hostages, former Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark called Monday for Congress to investigate the CIA's role over the years in supporting the regime of the now-deposed Shah of Iran.

He said that any U.S. policies that foster further instability in Iran would not be in the interest of the United States and could only drive Iran into the Soviet Union's sphere of influence.

"I think if the (U.S.) government will be calm and act wisely and compassionately, the hostages may be released quickly," Clark, who defied a presidential ban on travel to Iran, told a crowded press conference in Manhattan. "Most there recognize Iran is hostage to the hostages. But they (the Iranians) cannot appear to be yielding to pressure."

He said that no Iranian official he talked to during his recent visit called for trials for the hostages.

"The mood is much better in Iran than any time since the hostages were taken," he said.

Clark said he would attempt to conduct his own investigation of CIA activities in Iran if Congress refuses to act, a thought he acknowledged that such a private effort would be difficult and perhaps limited in scope.

"I urge the Congress to undertake investigations," he said.

President Carter said last week it was his "inclination" to prosecute Clark and nine other Americans who accompanied him to an international conference in Iran, although the decision will be made by Atty. Gen. Benjamin R. Civiletti.

In meeting reporters, Clark said the American delegation's attendance at the 54-nation meeting was a positive

step toward the hostages' release. He explained that the U.S. representatives had persuaded at least 12 other countries present to urge the immediate release of the hostages. The convention, he said, called for a peaceful resolution of the dispute between the United States and Iran. And Clark said his delegation was the first to mention the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the meeting.

"We should have been there," Clark said. "Thank heaven we were."

"We believe the right to travel is a fundamental human right," he continued. "It is in the Magna Charta, in the Constitution, affirmed by the Supreme Court. We went to assemble, to associate with private citizens, to speak the truth as we see it."

"It is an awfully dangerous world we live in. The 1980s are going to be wild. We need to talk with each other."

"We went because we believe the American idea of freedom demanded it, that the ultimate un-American act would be not to go."

"I didn't join the Marines at 17 because I didn't love this country," he added.

Clark said the taking of the hostages started as a "happening."

"We can't let happenings lead us into war," he said. "But a chemistry set in, and the holding of the hostages became identified with superpower intervention."

Clark said he thought it was "stupid" to interfere with the education of Iranian students in the United States because of the hostage crisis. "Some day these students will be leaders," he explained, "and they will remember they were rustled and hustled out of the country."

The former attorney general said he had spoken with a number of the hostages' relatives since the conference, and he reiterated the position he took at the meeting in Iran.

"The hostages should be released now," he said. "We've had a number of calls from hostages' families saying 'Thank you. I care deeply about the hostages.'"

Clark repeated his view that the federal government should prosecute him if it believe that he broke the law by attending the five-day conference. But he made it clear he had no appetite for a court confrontation.

"I have better things to do than to undertake a sad little lawsuit," he said.